

## FCC Proceeding 05-235

The use of Morse Code in general seems to be on the decline. As always, there are those that use and love the mode, and that type of activity seems to fluctuate over time. Overall, however, both nationally and internationally, CW seems to be a declining art.

I agree with the elimination of the Morse Code requirement for testing --- with caveats.

When something costs you nothing, whether monetarily or through personal effort, the tendency seems to be to assign that zero value to the item. If you assign a zero value to an item, then if that item is degraded in quality or lost altogether, you feel you have lost nothing. That seems to be where Amateur Radio is heading. Today, the effort to obtain an Amateur Radio license has now reached the point where no, or very minimal, effort is required.

The tests are very basic and are made simpler by the use of multiple “guess” answers to the questions. Additionally, the questions are fixed along with a designated choice for the proper answer to each. To make it even simpler, these questions and answers are public domain. This enables people to pass the tests, not by studying and learning the material, but by “memorizing the answers.”

This is the comment I hear every day, “... I would upgrade but I have not had the time to learn the answers.” I even heard a father on 2-meters bragging about his recently licensed, 12-year old son. He stated his son had memorized the answers and passed the test without knowing anything about Amateur Radio.

On the air, you can hear and easily identify those that apparently passed the same way. These individuals express ideas and ask questions that show they could not have learned the material required to pass the test. They have no basic knowledge of frequencies, how repeaters work, what is an offset and numerous other basics and Amateur should know.

I could go on for pages with specific examples but it would solve nothing. Instead, I offer a suggestion to both add value to the Amateur Radio license and improve the necessary knowledge level of the service as a whole.

First, as we all know, detailed technical knowledge is not the necessity it used to be. With the newer radios, repair-at-home is not what it used to be. Also, with the newer technology, home-brew rigs seem to be less and less attractive. However, newer modes of operation, along with more complicated operation of current radios, seem to be on the increase. Perhaps a shift in test questions is in order.

I suggest future test questions should be targeted more toward operational items and less toward technical expertise. Assure new licensees understand microphone gain versus deviation, how repeaters function & what is an offset, how over-modulation can create splatter on SSB and increase effective bandwidth, what determines an SWR and the effect of the ratio and similar questions that will improve the new licensee's operational skills.

To add value to the license, the actual test should be handled in a different manner. The questions should not be set in a pool, instead allowing the VCs more flexibility to create questions from a given set of test areas or subjects. Additionally, the actual questions and answers should not be published to help prevent memorizing answers and help the push to studying the background material.

When applicants have to expend efforts to study course material to pass the tests, their investment in time and those efforts will give them, I feel, a sense of value to that accomplishment and a value to the awarded license.

G. Bryson Lewis

W4JYV

605 South Club Court

Hermitage, TN 37076